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MARR, ASEC, MOPS, KPKO, CG

SUBJECT: DRC: SCENESETTER FOR CODEL SMITH  
(JANUARY 2-5, 2008)

11. (SBU) Summary: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is moving slowly as it grapples with solutions to fundamental governance, security and development challenges following the historic 2006 national elections. The promise of peace and democratization and the importance of the DRC as the linchpin of central Africa and beyond have made it one of the Department's top priority assistance countries in Africa. The inability of the Government of the DRC (GDRC) to end an insurgency in the east closely linked to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda has hindered greater progress in all areas and threatens the Government's already fragile base of support. The insurgency has also led to widespread insecurity in the region, contributing to a political and judicial vacuum in which women and children are routinely abused while those who perpetrate those crimes go unpunished. Your arrival in the DRC comes at a critical moment. The GDRC, still smarting from a major military setback in early December, has decided to change course by resolving the problem of insecurity in the east through political means and will convene on January 7 a Conference bringing together several hundred regional leaders to map out consensus strategies to achieve peace, stability and development. Your visit will reinforce U.S. commitment to a long partnership with the Congolese people to develop democratic institutions and reinforce our shared objective of a peaceful and prosperous DRC. End summary.

12. (SBU) Your January 2-5 visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a reaffirmation of U.S. Government support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its very young democracy. Your visit comes less than 13 months after the inauguration of President Joseph Kabila, whose father Laurent-Desire Kabila succeeded in overthrowing dictator Joseph-Desire Mobutu after a struggle lasting more than 30 years. Joseph Kabila took the reins of power after his father was killed by a bodyguard in 2001. Kabila led the DRC through a difficult transition from dictatorship, mismanagement and devastating wars (which are believed to have taken the lives of more than four million people between 1996 and 2002), through the successful presidential and parliamentary elections in 2006. The electoral process produced a government which is now confronting the challenges of developing democratic institutions amid popular expectations of change. This situation calls for continued and sustained U.S. engagement in a country the size of the United States east of the Mississippi that could be the linchpin for the development of all of central Africa.

13. (SBU) The Department's 2006 decision to identify the DRC as one of seven priority assistance countries in Africa reflected achievements to date, the promise of the peace and democratization processes, and the country's importance to regional stability and development. Our assistance program fully supports and reflects the transformational diplomacy goals laid out by the Secretary. The Mission's overriding policy goals focus on implanting a culture of democracy, accountable governance and respect for human rights, while promoting broad economic development in a stable Congo at peace with its neighbors and itself. USAID's 2006 budget for DRC programs totaled USD 68 million, including funds received from central accounts but excluding IFDA (disaster assistance). Amounts for 2007 have risen to USD 71 million (with supplemental funding),

and are projected to rise in 2008 to USD 80.2 million, including increases in the areas of peace and security, governing justly and democratically, and economic growth.

## Peace and Security

14. (SBU) The security situation in the DRC remains precarious in many areas, particularly in the eastern provinces. The Congolese military -- FARDC -- (in French acronym for "Forces Armees de la Republique Democratique du Congo") suffers from weak command and control, corruption, poor operational planning, limited training, and questionable loyalty on the part of some troops. Military forces are also responsible for some of the worst human rights abuses in the country and, perhaps, in the entire world. The Kivu provinces merit particular attention. Tensions there, particularly in North Kivu, have risen since the 2006 national elections. Challenges to the GDRC in North Kivu posed by insurgent General Laurent Nkunda, a self-proclaimed defender of the Congo's small Tutsi population, and ex-FAR/Interahamwe Rwandan Hutu fighters of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) are testimony to long-standing and unresolved differences among local communities and with the neighboring country of Rwanda. In South Kivu, the Congolese military launched operations in July 2007 against a small group of armed insurgents, most of whom belong to a specific Congolese Tutsi ethnic sub-group called Banyamulenge.

15. (SBU) The government's approach to military integration in the Kivus has added to security concerns. As a result of negotiations with Nkunda, in January 2007 the government, with support from the United Nations and the international community, abandoned its traditional armed forces integration program (known as "brassage" in French), in favor of a new arrangement (known as "mixage" in French) that "mixed" soldiers loyal to Nkunda and pro-government forces into new units. The "brassage" process attempted to break up

former chains of command and regional ties by combining troops from different armed groups, providing them with a common training plan, and dispatching them away from their past area of operations. By contrast, "mixage" kept these new units in North Kivu, allowing pro-Nkunda elements to expand their influence and control throughout the province. The deployment of these forces -- particularly of the Nkunda loyalists who had recently fought against some of the local population where they were now stationed -- exacerbated ethnic tensions, increased security fears, and contributed to a deterioration in the province's humanitarian situation. "Mixage" has been generally discredited, while "brassage" has had only limited success in forging a modern army.

16. (SBU) Foreign armed groups operating in the DRC are not just an internal problem; they are also a source of friction between the Congo and its neighbors. While the number of foreign fighters has diminished in recent years, they still pose a threat to a country's overall security and stability, and the FARDC has been largely unable to eliminate them. The FDLR, formed from the remnants of the Army for the Liberation of Rwanda and former Interahamwe fighters, remains the largest of these groups, with approximately 6,000-8,000 combatants in the Kivus. Among the leadership of the FDLR/Interahamwe are a number of suspected or known "genocidaires," individuals implicated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. An estimated 500 members of the Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) operate in northeastern North Kivu along the Ugandan border. In addition, a small number of fighters with the Lord's Resistance Army operate in a remote northern section of Garamba National Park on the Sudanese border. LRA forces appear to have diminished considerably in recent months because of deaths in the leadership and defections to Uganda.

MONUC -- the only nationwide institution

17. (SBU) The United Nations is present throughout the DRC through MONUC (French acronym for "Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en Republique Democratique du Congo") the 17,000-strong peacekeeping operation (PKO) with military contingents in all provinces and major cities. It also has more than 3,000 civilian employees. Headed by a former U.S. ambassador to the DRC, William Swing, MONUC was created in 1999 pursuant to the Lusaka accords and

a UN Security Council mandate. It is the largest and most expensive UN peacekeeping operation in history, costing more than \$1 billion per year. The U.S., as the largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget, pays 27 percent of MONUC's budget, i.e. approximately \$300 million dollars per annum, but is not a troop contributor. Leading troop contributors are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Africa, Uruguay and Nepal, all with contingents of more than 1,000 individuals. Much more than a simple PKO, MONUC is in fact the only institution in the DRC with nationwide military, transportation, communications, and administrative capabilities. In the absence of a meaningful GDRC presence outside Kinshasa and some provincial cities, it provides services that usually are the domain of a national government. MONUC's Radio Okapi, for example, is the only FM radio station broadcasting throughout the DRC in the country's five official languages; MONUC also maintains regular flights to all major DRC airports.

18. (SBU) MONUC has succeeded in preventing a return to the civil and international wars that prevailed in the DRC prior to its creation in 1999. Its record in other areas, however, is mixed. In 2004 the international media carried reports of sexual abuse by MONUC forces. Ambassador Swing decided to meet the charges head on, adopting a zero tolerance policy and agreeing to tough interviews on U.S. network television. A number of suspected pedophiles were arrested and sent home for trial and punishment. Swing's tough policies appear to have worked; the scandal is no longer in the headlines. But MONUC faces even greater challenges today. In the eastern Congo, where MONUC is the only obstacle to a virtual takeover of North Kivu province by insurgent movements, MONUC has come under great criticism from local populations and even the GDRC for not undertaking military action against the insurgencies. Constrained by a UN Charter Chapter VII mandate that does not envision offensive actions, MONUC has become highly unpopular in certain areas and has even been attacked by angry crowds. Despite these limitations, MONUC has energetically support U.S. diplomatic efforts, ensuring the safety of senior advisor Shortley (see para. 11 below) and facilitating a number of meetings between Congolese and Rwandan officials. Ambassador Swing leaves MONUC in early January and will be replaced by Alan Doss, a UK citizen who formerly served as head of the UN PKO in Liberia.

U.S. efforts to bring peace to the east  
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19. (SBU) The United States has played a key role in efforts to bring about peace in the eastern Congo. In 2004, the U.S. launched the Tripartite Plus (TP+) process, a forum to bring together senior officials from the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, plus Burundi. Meeting quarterly under U.S. sponsorship, TP+ serves as a confidence

building mechanism to help the cooperation and regional dialogue necessary to achieve and maintain peace. TP+ has two commissions: one for foreign ministers, and another for Chiefs of Defense ("CHODS"). A number of agreements negotiated at TP+ meetings have contributed to increased cooperation in the areas of security, intelligence sharing and defense. A special summit meeting of the TP+, under the chairmanship of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,

was held in Addis Ababa on December 5 at the head of state level. Kabila was the only head of state unable to attend the meeting because of commitments at home. The DRC, represented by three ministers, was an active participant, however, and the meeting resulted in strengthened commitments to seek peaceful solutions to the conflict in the eastern Congo and to increased cooperation between Tripartite Plus members.

110. (SBU) In mid-2007 the U.S. stepped up efforts to bring peace to North Kivu. In late September, Secretary of Rice met with President Kabila in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly. Kabila requested that the U.S. establish an embassy office in Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu. At the same meeting the Secretary extended an invitation from President Bush for a meeting

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at the White House later in the fall. The Kabila White House visit was held on October 26. A major topic of the meeting was the conflict in the eastern Congo. The presidents also discussed U.S. assistance to the DRC, including increased aid to combat malaria and

AIDS, and the war on terrorism. President Bush told President Kabila that the U.S. would open an Embassy office in Goma. The first Foreign Service officer in Goma arrived in early November and the office has been staffed ever since by special detailees from Washington or Embassy Kinshasa staff. The Department of State and Embassy Kinshasa are currently reviewing plans to maintain the office throughout 2008.

¶11. (SBU) African Affairs Bureau Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer's senior advisor, Tim Shortley, visited the DRC in October, meeting with President Kabila and senior GDRC officials from a wide range of political affiliations, and with UN and NGO officials. Shortley presented to Kabila ideas for achieving a negotiated settlement to end the Nkunda and FDLR insurgencies. Kabila authorized Shortley to pursue his ideas, including establishing telephone contact with General Nkunda and working with the Government of Rwanda to decrease tensions between the two countries. Shortley returned to the DRC in November and December and, with GDRC approval, met with Nkunda in his stronghold in North Kivu. Working closely with special envoys from the United Nations, the European Union, and South Africa, Shortley helped broker an agreement signed in Nairobi on November 9 between the GDRC and the Government of Rwanda to adopt a joint approach to dealing with the FDLR/Interahamwe insurgency. Shortley's services were considered so valuable that President Kabila asked him to return to the DRC immediately after the failure of a military offensive against Nkunda in early December. Shortley quickly negotiated a new agreement whereby Nkunda withdraw from territory he had occupied during the FARDC offensive. Shortley will continue to play a leading role at the upcoming Kivus Conference January 7-14 and in implementing agreements reached there.

#### Relations with neighbors

¶12. (SBU) The DRC's relations with its nine neighbors are relatively peaceful, though there are some underlying problems. The Tripartite Plus Commission has made progress in reducing general cross-border tensions in the Great Lakes region, but greater political will is needed to normalize relations. Poorly-defined borders have become a recent cause for concern. The DRC and Angola remain at odds over control of a strip of land in a diamond-rich frontier area, resulting in outcries of protest in the Kinshasa press. They have agreed to resolve the disagreement via a technical boundary demarcation with assistance from former colonial powers Belgium and Portugal. In early August, Ugandan and Congolese military forces exchanged fire in Lake Albert, bordering Uganda and the DRC's northeastern Ituri District, after an oil exploration team reportedly crossed into DRC territory. The dispute centers on a

small piece of oil-rich land occupied by Congolese but claimed by Uganda. In November they met in Uganda and appear to be headed towards settling the dispute.

¶13. (SBU) Donor-funded security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs have achieved mixed success at best, and low-level conflict remains in many eastern areas. More than 70,000 combatants remain to be disarmed and demobilized nationwide. A new phase of DDR in Ituri, with USD 500,000 from USAID, was launched in early August 2007 with the aim of demobilizing an estimated 4,500 militia members. A majority of the 4,500 turned themselves in to apply for DDR. The European Union has long had a major involvement in the security sector, including established European Security (EUSEC) and European Police (EUPOL) missions directing programs in the Congo. Other EU countries, notably France and Belgium, have provided substantial funding support. South Africa and Angola have also played major

roles, including the training and equipping of integrated military brigades. An international donor conference on SSR has been in the planning stages for several months and is expected to be held as early as February, 2008.

¶14. (SBU) USG involvement in security sector reform has received relatively little funding, but we anticipate additional activities in the near future. A training program for brigade-level officers is ongoing in Kinshasa. Thanks to USD 5 million in funding from FY2006 PKO funds, we plan to rehabilitate the officer training



academy, provide officer training, and make significant investment in the military justice system. The International Military and Education Training Program (IMET) funds U.S.-based courses that include English-language training. Funds from the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, De-mining and Related Projects Appropriation (NADR) pay for the destruction of obsolete ordnance have been approved. For FY2008, USD 8.4 million has already been allocated from the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. Funding from the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (NCLE) program, NADR and Peacekeeping Operation (PKO) funds will enable greater involvement in SSR activities including, for the first time, police training. In late January a team from AFRICOM will arrive in the DRC to prepare the groundwork for a training program to create a rapid-reaction force. Training should begin in March.

#### Governing Justly and Democratically

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¶15. (SBU) The Congolese people continue to hold high expectations that the democratic process will improve their lives. The relatively high voter turnout in the July and October 2006 presidential and legislative elections demonstrated citizens' commitment to the goal of a creating a democratic system of government. New institutions, however, have been slow to generate momentum. The National Assembly and Senate have only a small number of members with legislative or government experience and are just beginning to consider a backlog of important legislation. Provincial officials, lacking resources, money and experience, are unfamiliar with exercising newly-decentralized authority. Elections for local and municipal officials are tentatively scheduled for mid-2008.

¶16. (SBU) The role of the political opposition, as well as its rights and responsibilities, remain to be defined. Parties and candidates aligned with the Alliance for the Presidential Majority (AMP), Kabila's electoral coalition, won majorities in the National Assembly and Senate, as well as eight of eleven provincial assemblies and ten of eleven gubernatorial contests -- leaving the opposition with little apparent political clout. The Parliament has adopted legislation giving the Opposition certain protections and rights. Prominent opposition figure Jean-Pierre Bemba departed for Portugal in April 2007, following fighting in Kinshasa in March between government troops and his forces; plans for his return to the DRC are uncertain. Members of his party claim security forces harass their members and have attempted to muzzle their media outlets. Bemba has conditioned his return on guarantees concerning his personal protection and immunity from prosecution for the role his forces played in the March disturbances.

¶17. (SBU) USG governance and institutional reform programs, budgeted at USD 10.2 million for FY2007 and a proposed USD 20 million for FY 2008, focus on combating corruption and human rights abuses, developing independent judicial and legislative institutions, and facilitating decentralized state authority. Their objectives incorporate long-term transformation as well as direct citizen access to services. We continue to work with National Assembly deputies on drafting key legislative proposals, including laws relating to the financing of political parties, decentralization, the establishment of a national election commission, and the protection of human rights. We have also conducted capacity-building seminars for deputies and their staffs, supported the creation of provincial watchdog and advocacy groups to encourage citizen participation in democratic processes, and worked to develop skills of political party members, foster grassroots anti-corruption initiatives, and establish mobile courts and legal aid clinics.

#### Economic Growth

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¶18. (SBU) The Congolese population, estimated at over 60 million people, has not benefited from the country's vast array of natural resources (minerals, forests, hydroelectric potential). With over 90 percent unemployment and an informal sector that rivals the formal economy, most people survive on less than one dollar a day. Despite annual GDP growth since 2003 of over five percent, per capita GDP is only just over USD 100. It is estimated that at the current growth rate, it will take until the middle of this century

for per capita income to reach pre-independence levels.

¶19. (SBU) Despite some progress on macroeconomic and financial

reform objectives since 2003, the International Monetary Fund Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) lapsed in April 2006, due mainly to continued government overspending. This resulted in further losses of outside assistance for a budget of only USD 2 billion in 2006. The DRC has been granted Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) status, but with no PRGF in place, is not making progress toward achieving the debt reduction envisioned. An IMF team in November and December reported progress in the negotiation of a new PRGF; if an IMF program is renegotiated soon, the DRC could see some debt forgiveness (including nearly half a billion dollars still owed to the U.S.) by the end of 2008.

¶20. (SBU) The 2007 budget, signed into law by President Kabila in the second half of the year, calls for an unrealistic expenditure level of USD 2.4 billion, much of it for government salaries (including civil servants, public school teachers and military personnel) and the security sector. Without much-needed outside budget support, the GDRC faced large deficits 2007, which historically it has reacted to with large amounts of currency issuance. The GDRC is normally able to support less than half of its budget from revenues. So far in 2007, GDRC spending has been strictly contained within budgetary limits, but many of its expenses come due only during the last quarter of the year. The 2008 budget is expected to be approved by Parliament by before January 1, 2008.

¶21. (SBU) The GDRC is attempting to implement its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) as approved in mid-2006 by the IMF and World Bank boards. The five-year government program approved by the National Assembly in February 2007 is based on the PRSP and focuses heavily on the five areas highlighted by President Kabila in his campaign: infrastructure, employment, education, water/electricity, and health. Economic growth depends upon all of these objectives, but the GDRC will need to dramatically increase revenues from the natural resource sector, continue to control spending, and renegotiate an IMF program if it is to achieve debt relief and obtain additional outside budget assistance. In 2007 the GDRC signed agreements with the Government of the People's Republic of China focusing on infrastructure in return for mining concessions. The contracts were not made public. Press reports allege the agreements are valued at between \$4 and \$6 billion.

¶22. (SBU) The USG is an active participant in the international donors' Country Assistance Framework (CAF) process for the period 2007-10, designed to align assistance strategies and support GDRC efforts to implement the PRSP. USG programs in support of economic growth are fairly modest, with USD 4 million going to agricultural production, but this may be doubled for FY2008. U.S. commercial interests in the DRC are small but growing, with an American company (Seaboard Corporation) running the largest flour mill in the country and an American mining company (Freeport-McMoran) gearing up to produce an estimated 100,000 tons of copper metal by the end of 2008. USAID and the British Department for International Development (DFID) are collaborating on efforts to help the GDRC implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). USAID, through the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) and the Congo Basin Forestry Partnership (CBFP) is working to promote better management of the forestry sector. Finally, a U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) initiative is looking at the hydroelectricity and transportation (river and rail) sectors for opportunities for U.S. business contributions to DRC infrastructure.

#### Humanitarian Assistance

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¶23. (SBU) Disaster relief and food assistance funds represent approximately one-half of all U.S. foreign assistance to the DRC, excluding support to MONUC. Four million people are estimated to have died as a consequence of 10 years of war and conflict. Low-level combat continues to cause large-scale population displacements in eastern areas of the country. Many social and economic support structures have collapsed as a result of neglect, corruption and lack of resources, leaving victims without

livelihoods, access to medical services and in many cases, places to live.

¶24. (SBU) A July 2007 report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance estimated there are more than 1.1 million internally displaced people (IDP's) in the DRC, most in the eastern regions of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. While the number of IDP's has substantially decreased in Ituri in recent months, the number of displaced in North Kivu has dramatically increased due to pervasive insecurity. An estimated 321,000 Congolese refugees remain in neighboring countries awaiting repatriation.

¶25. (SBU) Total non-food IDFA funding in FY2007 was USD 28.5 million. The U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) provides transportation and a start-up cash package to returning IDP's, and is mounting labor-intensive road rehabilitation programs.

The USG provided USD 37.8 million of food assistance in FY 2007, most channeled through the World Food Program for distribution in conflict areas.

#### Health

¶26. (SBU) Congolese social indicators are dismal: the DRC ranked 167th out of the 177 countries in the 2006 UNDP Human Development Report. Health indicators are among the worst in the world. Infant and child mortality are 126 and 213 per thousand live births, respectively. Many preventable infectious diseases are prevalent, notably malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. HIV/AIDS infection rates stand at 4 percent of all adults, or approximately 1 million people -- among the top ten totals in the world.

¶27. (SBU) Health constitutes the United States' most important development effort. The public health care system is near complete collapse throughout the country. Lack of equipment, trained personnel, adequate facilities and supplies are among the obstacles preventing access to basic health care. Non-governmental organizations (NGO's) provide an estimated 80 percent of the limited care available. We plan to program over USD 55 million for primary pediatric health care in 82 rural health zones over the next three years, and continue to support national tuberculosis and polio eradication efforts. USAID plans to provide USD 12 million over four years for HIV/AIDS prevention and care; CDC funds surveillance and pediatric HIV/AIDS programs DOD has programs for military prevention and care. The Department of State has an innovative public diplomacy program to increase HIV/AIDS awareness.

#### The scene today

¶28. (SBU) In early December -- and despite insistent appeals from the U.S. and other international partners to refrain from the use of force -- the FARDC launched an offensive against the insurgency headed by General Laurent Nkunda. The Congolese military were quickly repelled, with thousands of "brassaged" troops abandoning their units. The total number of desertions is estimated at 6,000 - 9,000. The GDRC decided shortly after the failed military offensive to hold the long-awaited Conference on the Kivus (a GDRC priority since May, 2007) to bring together representatives of all sectors, including political officials, tribal leaders, parliamentarians, religious leaders, and even non-combatant members of insurgent groups. (Note: the FDLR will not be represented as its members are Rwandans, not Congolese). The Conference was originally scheduled for December 26 but was postponed due to insufficient lead time to ensure proper preparation. It is now scheduled to begin Sunday, January 7 and will last until January 14.

Hundreds of participants will go to Goma for the event. USAID has pledged approximately \$200,000; more may be given in the coming days. Other donors include the UK, the European Union and Canada. U.S. support will also include facilitation by Tim Shortley and, possibly, other Americans as well.

¶29. Your arrival comes at a moment of both great tension and great hope as the Congolese people look to their government, and the international community, for help to end a conflict that has cost

millions of dollars, uprooted hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, and resulted in thousands of deaths. It has also created an atmosphere of widespread insecurity, contributing to a political and judicial vacuum in which women and children are routinely abused, and in which those who perpetrate those crimes go unpunished. There are clear signs the population is growing impatient with the pace of the government's efforts and, even more alarmingly, is skeptical that democracy can solve its problems. In this environment, we ask you to help us to reinforce the following messages:

-- The Congolese people rightfully expect responsible leadership at home as well as supportive international partners. We will continue working with the new leadership as it develops transparent practices and establishes good governance for the well-being of the Congolese people.

-- Voters are eager to realize tangible benefits from their investment in democracy. They must cease being made victims of violence. Human rights must be respected and violators punished.

-- Congo has taken remarkable strides to replace war with peaceful democratic change. The successful elections were a tangible demonstration of the people's desire for peaceful governance. The United States is eager to see that momentum continue.

-- The Congolese population deserves to live in peace with itself and its neighbors. We urge the government to honor its commitments to complete the military integration process and to work with Rwanda and international partners, as agreed in Nairobi, to ensure the return of all foreign armed groups to their countries of origin.

-- We encourage political and military authorities to pursue a peaceful resolution of the security problems of eastern Congo.

-- The United States will continue to support and work closely with the GDRC and MONUC to bring about political reconciliation and to prevent further conflict in the DRC and the region.

-- We strongly support the Conference of the Kivus and are contributing funds and expertise to ensure its success. But the more important job will come after the Conference as we work to implement the Conference's agreements and, finally, to bring lasting peace to this troubled region.

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